



Field Naturalists' Club

of Ballarat Inc

April 2000

BUSH TREASURES

From "all about Australian Bush Gardens"
By Maloney, Walker and Mullins

ANNUAL PRESIDENT'S REPORT 2000

It gives me pleasure to present the President's report for the Field Naturalists' Club of Ballarat Inc. for the 1999/2000 year - the end of one century and beginning of the next. I hope somebody will present one at the end of this century.

Our membership remains around 50 and attendance at meetings and excursions has been very pleasing. Again we have met at the S.M.B. Horticulture School, corner of Gillies and Gregory Streets, Wendouree on the first Fridays of each month except January. We have continued first Sunday and mid-month excursions.

Speakers have all been interesting and informative and on behalf of all members I wish to thank them all for being willing to travel and address us. Greg Binns began with "The Wondrous North West" and a "Full Hand of Finches", Greg Cahill showed us how people are "Diversifying Farm Enterprises", Sue Haddon shared her enthusiasm for "Striped Legless Lizards", Catherine Barnes introduced us to "Water Watch", Gary Cheers taught us about "Mosses, Lichens and Liverworts", Barry Kentish taught us about the "Cocos/Keeling Islands and the Red-Footed Boobies", Frank Harrap shared with us his video of the "Animals of East Africa", Dr Julian Hollis spoke about "Six Million Years of Volcanoes in the Ballarat Area", and Ian Ashton taught us about "Sea and Shore Birds".



Our Stella Bedggood Memorial Lecture was again a particular highlight and attended by a big gathering of the Bedggood clan - our Andrew's family. Mr John Landy spoke about "Insect Camouflage Mechanisms" and showed his excellent slides to a large, appreciative audience. More popularly known for his Olympic and Empire/Commonwealth sporting prowess, his brilliant photos and extensive insect knowledge captivated us.

Excursions have allowed us to share time with good company in our wonderful Australian bush. We are fortunate to be within reach of quite different landscapes and habitats. We visited the Organ Pipes National Park, some little-known Central Highlands water reservoirs, Lake Esmond Botanical Gardens,

Mount Emu/Trawalla roadsides, La Gerche walk at Creswick, Monash University to be given a conducted tour of the Aboriginal garden by Dr Beth Gott, then on to Blackburn Lake reserve (this day on a bus capably driven by Paul Norquay), our Linton Block to eradicate weeds and rabbits, the Wombat Forest for a fungi search (Kevin also found inhabited Wombat burrows), Lal Lal to inspect our Anchor plants and on to the Bungal State Forest, walked part of the Creswick Miners' Trail, the Ted Errey walk in the Brisbane Ranges (with Geelong FN), Enfield Forest, Fryerstown (with Castlemaine FN), Enfield Forest/Monmouth Mine area to search (successfully) for last year's discovery of *Chiloglottis X pescottiana* and (unsuccessfully) for the Powerful Owl, Bamgani Forest, Barbara William's Talbot property for bird watching, Lal Lal to weed the anchor plants, Trentham / Blue Mountain area with Dr Julian Hollis following the volcano talk, Point Lonsdale for a marine discovery day with Clarrie Handreck, Lake Burrumbeet and this Sunday we will visit Mount Langi Ghiran to see Aboriginal caves and surrounding bush.

As well as day excursions we have had people go to Victorian campouts in Sale and Mildura and have held a club campout at Peterborough. Next weekend some members will go to Ocean Grove for Geelong's Victorian autumn campout. We have not been armchair naturalists. We have visited sea, mountains, forest, grasslands, lakes, rivers, waterfalls, drylands, scrubby bush, rockpools, nearby areas and further afield. Members have also travelled around the world and shared these experiences with us. A very interesting year.

We have spent considerable time learning about the West Victoria Regional Forest Agreement. We have attended seminars, workshops, field trips and meetings, have read copious documents and eventually mailed a club submission as well as individual ones. The R.F.A. is due to be signed on March 31 and will control forest use for the next 20 years. With so little forest remaining in western Victoria this has naturally concerned us.

We have had people involved in Lake Esmond



recommendations, the Ballarat North Gardens Wetlands Project, Lake Wendouree, Ballarat Common and Lal Lal proposals. We do more than admire our flora and fauna. We hope we are helping to preserve it.

It was with pleasure that we recognised long, valuable commitment to our club by Lyndsay Fink and Margaret Rotheram. They were both presented with Club medallions to show our appreciation of their efforts.

An on-going activity is assisting Ken Kraaijeveld to band, measure and check the Lake Wendouree black swans. We are reminded to report sightings of band numbers to provide continuing information about bird habits and movements to Ken. He will address us soon to explain his project.



Our library has continued to grow, particularly with the fourth and final volume of the Flora of Victoria. We have maintained affiliation with other environmental groups and provided plant or bird lists periodically as requested. We gratefully accepted Carol Hall's offer to host an end-of-year barbecue lunch. It rained but the garage was excellent and we enjoyed our time as well as Carol's excellent mince pies.

My sincere thanks go to everybody who has helped in countless ways to the smooth running of the club this year, especially all committee members. My particular thanks to Pat Murphy who has been a wonderful secretary for the past two years and is now relinquishing this task. She has been capably reliable at all times - invaluable to me and I know she will still help. Brian Andrews has continued to provide us monthly with interesting newsletters - the last few months we have run out. Obviously keenly collected! Thank you all for contributing but especially to Brian for faithfully compiling and reporting all our events and news. Thank you John Gregurke for keeping such accurate track of all money in and out.

I hope you have enjoyed the past year and trust the coming one will reveal all sorts of pleasures and treasures.

Claire Dalman

Kangaroo Apple, Cape Gooseberry and Early Nancy
from "Wild Food in Aust" by AB & JW Cribb...Ed p3

OUTING TO MOUNT LANGI GHIRAN...Led by Claire Dalman.

Twenty members in total, in eight cars arrived at the start of the LARNE-JEERING walking track in the Langi Ghiran State Park, after assembling on a wild day at Creswick Plaza. On the way to the initial assembly Joan Riddell reported seeing a black rabbit crossing the Glenelg Highway between Scarsdale and Linton.

At 11am approximately we all set off up the short walking track which passed through a mixed forest of yellow box, and yellow gum, also including *Banksia marginata* in flower and the very widespread hopbush *Dodonaea cuneata* which Lyndsay Fink advised us obtains its Latin name from the nature of the leaf which is shaped like cuneiform writing of the ancient SUMERIANS of Mesopotamia - the track terminated at two massive granite tors leaning against one another, forming an open ended cavernous space - known affectionately as Little Ayers Rock. Also in the forest native bracken fern and red stringybark all growing in a granitic sand soil. Red gums grow on the flats. At one end of the rock painted on the rock walls are the artistic works of the NGUTUWUL BALUG Aboriginal people who also made stone tools and ground ochre here. They passed folklore down to their young people here firstly by word of mouth and secondly through the agency of the motifs painted on the rock wall - the motifs were once more vibrant and they are unique to these Aboriginal people. The Ballarat and District Aboriginal Co-operative is attempting to maintain this site. Lar-ne-jeering means "home of the black cockatoo". Presumably both the red-tailed and yellow-tailed species were prolific but I believe the red-tailed species is now confined to parts of the state further west. At the shelter site we observed a disused bird's nest about a metre off the ground in the branches of the small native bush *Senecio odoratus* identified by Helen Burgess and fairly abundant, the nest was possibly that of a honeyeater or spinebill. Also hedge wattle *Acacia paradoxa (armata)* with the spines on its branches. Brian Andrews pointed out that he thought it was the only native wattle that landowners could clear without a permit - also that it is a favourite nesting haunt of birds - the spines offering protection from predators. A wedge-tailed eagle was observed soaring high in the sky to the south. Some stands of late black wattle *A. mearnsii* evident. Common brown butterflies flitted through the forest. Drooping mistletoe was also evident.

We then departed for Langi Ghiran Picnic Area in convoy. A swamp wallaby watched impassively from the shade of a tree as we arrived. Carol Hall and Lyndsay Fink reported seeing a partially albino chough and a mud nest of this species en

route. This bird, with a white back and the usual black and white wings, black head and tail was within a group of this species. Also observed at this location - crimson rosella and fuscous honeyeater by John Gregurke, also both white throated and brown tree creepers and a willie wagtail.

Next we drove to Langi Ghiran Reservoir, a substantial granite block wall holding back a substantial body of water. Some intrepid members crossed the wall. A mud wasp nest was observed in a twig sitting in the water, Brian Andrews waded in boots and all to purloin this specimen for closer examination - reminiscent of HM Stanley wading through a swamp in darkest Africa I thought! Also evidence of yabbies here. Clambering heath *Astroloma* observed.

We followed a granite slab water channel uphill for about a kilometre to a lookout; also here water gravitates across the saddle from Ararat Reservoir which is 100 metres higher - the catchment for which is centred around Mount Cole, about 8-10 kilometres away. Such is the water supply for Ararat - a convoluted and intriguing system but clever and beautiful in its own way.

We subsequently returned to the picnic area, had a cup of tea and departed for home. The swamp wallaby nonchalantly watched us - from under the same tree - depart.

Tony Johns.

VFNCA Geelong Campout...10th - 13th March, 2000

Geelong Field Naturalists Club organized a busy and interesting program for the Autumn Campout.

The excursion to the Western Treatment Plant at Werribee recorded over 50 species of birds. Some of the waders had already migrated but others were developing breeding plumage. A few Curlew Sandpipers had chestnut breasts. Other waders included many Red-necked Stints and Sharp-tailed Sandpipers and a few Bar-tailed Godwits, Knots and Greenshanks. Brown Falcons, Swamp Harriers and Whistling Kites were seen frequently swooping over the area. Masses of Black Swans, Chestnut Teal and Shelduck were on the ponds. We spotted a Welcome swallow that was the colour of milky coffee with the faint markings of a normal bird. Other swallows were harassing it while perched on a post.

Edward's Point was named in the 1920's after a local councillor, Edward Harvey. We learnt this from Peter Munster, the president of the friends group who is an historian and led the excursion. A leafhopper introduced from South Africa has

been released to control bridal creeper. The salt marsh areas support Bearded Glasswort, Thickhead Glasswort and Shrubby Glasswort. At low tide Pied Oystercatchers, Golden Plover, Red-capped Dotterel and Ruddy Turnstone were feeding on the mud flats. As we walked back along the beach 100 shells were collected at sites 200 metres apart. We named these with the help of our leaders and the results were collated.

Ocean Grove Park is being developed on the former site of Ingamels Camp in the centre of Ocean Grove. The Yellow Gums growing there are a recently identified sub-species - *Eucalyptus leucoxylon bellarinensis*. Most of the Ocean Grove Nature Reserve has not been burnt for at least 100 years. Black and Drooping Sheoak dominate the vegetation with a dense understorey of saw sedge and grass. This has prevented regeneration of eucalypts. A wildfire 3 years ago has stimulated dense germination of sheoaks.

Barwon Heads-Breamlea, Queenscliff Marine Discovery Centre, Swan Bay mudflats, Mud Island, Swan Island and Point Lonsdale rock platform were the venues for other excursions.

The evening speakers all followed the theme of Marine Ecology. Friday night we were treated to wonderful slides that illustrated the diversity of Temperate Reef Ecology. Patrick O'Callaghan of the Marine Discovery Centre told us that the southern Australian waters are not very productive but have much greater diversity of organisms than the glamorous tropical reefs. Geoff Howard, Parliamentary Secretary for the Environment, spoke after dinner on Saturday evening and answered many questions from the floor. He was grilled on the issues concerning Field Naturalists across the state. Tim Allen, Victorian Coordinator of the Marine and Coastal Community Network, told that Marine National Parks are essential to preserve the biodiversity of marine ecosystems. Over fishing has greatly altered marine ecology. Members of the Marine Research Group of Field Naturalists Club of Victoria explained the formation of the Point Lonsdale rock platform and showed slides of the variety of animals that would be seen on the excursion next day.

John Gregurke

MARCH POSER...ELFIN'S CRAZY QUIZ

The solutions were as follows:- 1. Platypus. 2. Kites.
3. Dingos. 4. Teatree. 5. Numbat. 6. Lyrebird. Elfin

APRIL POSER...SUN-LOVERS

How and why do flatweed and sunflower flowers etc "follow the sun"?

Roger Thomas

MARCH MEETING

Our AGM, Claire Dalman gave the President's Report and John Gregurke gave the treasurer's report. Jack Netherway took the chair. Claire was re-elected unopposed to the position of President and Greg was likewise elected to Vice President. Pat Murphy requested a break from the job of Secretary and John Gregurke volunteered to take on the job. I agreed to stay on as Editor and Helen Burgess, Maureen Christie, Lyndsay Fink, Carol Hall and John Mildren were re-elected, BUT we did not have a treasurer! Amidst the silence Bob Curtain said that he would be prepared to do the job, a nomination form was filled out and Bob was voted in before he had time to change his mind! THANKS BOB! We then of course realized that we had broken protocol by having 11 members on the committee, but this was not seen as a problem, after all - many hands make light work.

We then moved on to general business and field reports - these have been omitted due to lack of space - but can be found in the relevant club record books.

Finally we proceeded to our presentation of "1999 The Year That Was". Photographs had been displayed throughout the meeting by Claire, Helen and Bob. Carol, Greg, Pat and I gave a combined slide presentation of excursions and related activities - and many people joined in to have their say. Helen showed slides of land crabs seen on her recent overseas trip, John Gregurke showed more slides and finally Frank Harrap showed a video of Mosquito Flat. Brian Andrews

DIARY DATES

Fri 7th April. Meeting. Tasmanian Trip. Speaker Ern Perkins OAM, Castlemaine FNC.

Sun 9th April. Excursion. Ballarat Gardens. Leader Joan Garner, Friends of Ballarat Botanic Garden.

Wed 26th April. Committee Meeting. Helen's, , 7-30pm.

Fri 5th May. Meeting. Swans of Lake Wendouree (and other areas). Speaker Ken Kraaijeveld.

Sun 7th May. Excursion. Lexton Area. Leader Eileen Anderson.

-----***----- FNCB -----***-----

Meetings are held at the Ballarat Horticulture centre, corner of Gregory and Gillies Streets, ie. the NW corner of the Botanic Gardens, VICROADS 254 P8, commencing at 7-30pm

Excursions depart from Creswick Plaza, VICROADS 255 M10, at 9-30 am, unless specified otherwise.

Committee: Claire Dalman (President).. , Greg Binns (Vice President).. , John Gregurke (Secretary).. , Bob Curtain (Treasurer)..**** ****, Brian Andrews (Editor).. , Helen Burgess, Maureen Christie, Lyndsay Fink, Carol Hall, John Mildren, Pat Murphy.

Postal Address: PO Box 328W, Ballarat West, 3350

Inc Reg No A0014919P